

LUDENDORFF IS PASSING THE BUCK; WHERE DOES THE BLAME REALLY LIE?

THE German army fought through the war under three chiefs of staff, von Moltke, von Falkenhayn and Ludendorff.

A surprised reader may declare that the third chief was von Hindenburg and not Ludendorff, but not so. Von Hindenburg was the third chief, nominally, but he furnished merely the driving power. Ludendorff planned the strategy, distributed the forces and directed the action. As quartermaster general of the imperial army, he was the chief of staff. Hindenburg had vast pushing power and valuable cohesive force. The ideal of the German army and of the civilians alike after his victory against Russia, he had the prestige which should go with a successful chief of staff. Hindenburg planned but one great piece of strategy, the victory of the Marne lakes, and, to be sure, it was a masterpiece. He planned it years before war came. It was the realization of his one big idea; it was the battle of his life.

Moreover, Ludendorff admits he was the real chief of staff, thus confirming the assertions of military critics many months before the war ended. Has he not published an explanation of his campaign? And has he not in that explanation shown a disposition to "shift" himself out of public view in Germany by roundly scolding von Moltke and von Falkenhayn for their alleged blunders?

The way Ludendorff tells it, these two old fossils messed things up so that he could not possibly win. He blames everything on von Moltke's alleged defective strategy and von Falkenhayn's alleged incompetence.

Paraphrasing this, reminds one very much of the crown prince's explanation of his failure to take Verdun. His ex-royal highness said he was much averse to making the assault, but that a doddering general staff, or worse, to that effect, ordered him to go ahead and he had to do it.

Anyway, we now have two-thirds of the German high command's excuse for having lost the war. When von Falkenhayn and von Moltke write about Ludendorff, the remaining third will be made available.

Brief summaries of the Ludendorff statement cabled to this country do not state in what respect von Moltke was in error. It may be that he is accused of blundering in having made the initial drive in 1914 through Belgium, thus dragging an exasperated Great Britain into the war. It could be argued that Germany could have avoided that by driving straight against the French front and reducing Verdun and Toul fortresses with the mighty howitzers which worked such havoc at the big Belgian masses of Liege and Namur.

That is probably what Ludendorff is driving at and, in the light of subsequent events, it reads well. Von Moltke was chief of staff quite awhile before the war and it was the general staff which was head that devised the strategy which Germany used in opening the war.

But there is this to be said for von Moltke: He acted on the best information the secret service was able to obtain, which was to the effect that Great Britain was too stupefied with peace, too completely enthralled by pacifists, too fat and lazy to entertain the thought of war. This view was corroborated, by implication at least, by the statements of many leading Englishmen who were declaring that England was done with warfare and was entirely engaged in peaceful pursuits. What German could imagine that England would strike lethargy in a moment and grasp the sword to defend a little country like Belgium?

With England counted out, therefore, the plan to strike through Belgium was strategy of a high order. Here were the factors:

Germany planned a short, immense, all-mustering war. Time was an essential element. France was to be throttled before French mobilization could be completed. The Germans were to have been in Paris before France could recover from the first shock of surprise at being attacked. To do this was impossible if frontal assaults were delivered at the strongest points of defense France had—Verdun and Toul. A shorter way, beset with less resistance, lay through Belgium. The German high command knew what the big howitzers would do to the Belgian fortresses. It counted on little resistance from the Belgian army. It planned to dash straight through, seize the factories and iron and coal mines of France in the first few days and then strike straight for Paris.

It was a big plan and, from a cold blooded military viewpoint, it was brilliant, but it went wrong. In the first place, Belgian resistance was much stiffer than was expected and the march of the German army was delayed thereby. Second, an inflamed Britain dashed headlong into the war when Belgium was invaded. Belgian resistance allowed the British to get their "contemptible little army" into the field in time to assist the fast mobilizing French. And the two of them fought a brilliant retreat back to the Marne, where they took a desperate chance and started the war backward. Von Moltke failed because he didn't win, but his major strategy, considering the information he had, was beyond reproach to anyone but a Ludendorff seeking an alibi. Moltke having failed, he was ousted promptly and replaced by von Falkenhayn.

von Falkenhayn's strategy was also good, but—

He was credited with devising the system whereby Ger-

many dealt a blow at the French and British with the right fist and then at the Russians with the left fist, transferring driving power from one arm to the other and timing the blows to land just as the opponent came up a little groggy from the last one. It worked well, as everybody remarked at the time, but von Falkenhayn lost out when the Verdun smash failed.

Thus von Hindenburg, a popular hero and the idol of the army, after his big victories in the east, was elevated to the chief command, nominally, and Ludendorff did the work. They did well, too, but not well enough. Like the others, they failed only because they did not win. The German offensive of 1918 was, as every student of the war admits, admirably planned and executed. The Germans were not quite strong enough in men and materials to organize more than one drive at a time. For instance, there was the drive at Amiens in March which wiped out the British Fifth army along with many thousands of others. When it had been exploited to the limit of immediate possibilities, it was abandoned for the time for a drive further south, but so much time was required for the new arrangement that the allies had plenty of time to secure all necessary information in advance and get themselves set to meet the assault.

Even so, the final big crash, the supreme German effort, was the dash toward Paris by way of Chateau-Thierry, went forward vigorously from the hour of its beginning. It gave every promise of reaching the French capital and such was the exhaustion and hopelessness of the French troops that it probably would have done so had not Divine Providence and the generalissimo Foch thrown into the battle at the Marne the fresh, buoyant, unbeatable Yanks. It was the Americans who furnished that final bit of weight necessary to overturn the scales toward the side of the allies and start Ludendorff's armies toward sure defeat.

Ludendorff should blame—well, whom? Perhaps old be-whiskered von Tirpitz and his pan-German gang, who insisted on stacking everything on certain submarine warfare and thus dragged the United States into the war.

In the last analysis, the two glaring German blunders were the misconceptions that Great Britain and the United States were too fat-bellied to fight.

The Victory Loan

THE time for selling the Victory loan to the people of the United States is near at hand. It will lack the pushing patriotic inspiration provided in Liberty loan appeals to provide the sinews of war. Its chief commendation to the people will be its excellence as an investment.

The decision to issue obligations in the form of short term notes, running not more than five years, was excellent as furnishing an inducement to invest. All the short term loans placed by England in the United States, aggregating about \$1,300,000,000, were exceedingly popular with American investors, their absorption being helped unquestionably by the nearness of their maturity. That the public will show equal if not greater favor toward our own issues of similar kind is a foregone conclusion.

Also, short term notes were favored by the treasury department because of the belief that, with their redemption at par or near at hand, there would be less prospect of a fall in their price in the intervening period. The 4½ percent bonds of the last Liberty loan have lately sold about six points under par and another long term issue, with the same or a similar interest rate, would be handicapped in advance by that depreciation.

The investor is now asked to put his money into government bonds at a good interest rate for only five years. His money will be absolutely safe and the interest will come to his pocket or his bank account as regularly as the date for its payment rolls around and he will be helping the country while making money for himself. It is a simple investment without the least vestige of chance discoloring it.

When president Wilson gets done rearranging the map of Europe, he ought to be eligible for the presidency of a geographical society.

The fellows who held a mass meeting and declared they would free Gene Debs or go to jail themselves are getting lined up for free board and room.

A senate seat has been given to Archie Parr, but his election was considerably below par.

Possibly having decided he had talked too much, the former Kaiser is now sawing wood.

The fans fear that when the league of nations has a world series, our team may have to play on any old lot in any part of the world.

Yes, oil stock may pay more dividends than the interest on the new Victory loan—with the accent on the "may."

Little Interviews

Auto Drivers Should Adopt 'Safety First' As Slogan Mayor Seeks Means To Provide For Repairing The Streets

AT LEAST there have been numerous accidents on the streets of El Paso, caused by automobiles being hit, or colliding with street cars, said Carr Adams, "I have watched drivers take chances, it seemed, just to see how close they could come to a street car without hitting it. The men on the cars can only stop their cars; they can not steer out of the way, but an automobile has the whole street to itself. People should be careful. On South Stanton street, I have seen a number of times, automobile drivers say no attention whatever to the sounding of the townsmen's signal, but try and make it across the railroad and get caught inside the gates. Very recently I saw an auto stalled not six feet from the tracks. If the driver had got on the tracks, his machine would have been a wreck. The public seems to be very lax in 'Safety First' in the city of El Paso. In a town of this population, it seems as though the people, especially in the congested part of the town, would heed that little warning, 'Stop, Look and Listen.'"

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